

## **Criminal Exploitation of Children and Young People**

The term “county lines” is becoming more widely recognised and used to describe situations where young people may be trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation. What is often less understood is the experiences a young person faces and the potential for them to be harmed through various forms of abuse and exploitation as a result.

### **Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation:**

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18.
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation.

### **Signs to look out for:**

- Persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts /phone calls
- Relationships with controlling /older individuals or groups
- Leaving home / care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault /unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Significant decline in school results / performance
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

**Children and young people who are trafficked, exploited or coerced into committing crimes are victims in need of safeguarding and support. Report it to your safeguarding lead.**

Please find below the links to the Safeguarding Board websites for children and adults:

<http://www.sewsc.org.uk>

<http://www.gwasb.org.uk>